



HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
Regional Cooperation among Central Asian States within the
Framework of the Joint Plan of Action (JPoA) for the
Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-
Terrorism Strategy

3 March 2022, Tashkent

Opening remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov,
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

I am pleased to address you at the opening of this high-level international conference.

I would like to sincerely thank the President of Uzbekistan who suggested hosting this conference during the 75th General Assembly meeting. I also thank the Government for its hospitality.

I am also grateful to the Government of Uzbekistan for its support in helping organize this important event together with my Office, the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

As you know, the Joint Plan of Action was a first-of-its-kind initiative that has since inspired other regions to do the same. Now, ten years after the Plan was first adopted, it is time to take stock and review its achievements, learn the lessons encountered along the way, and chart a course for the updated Plan's implementation.

This event is extremely timely. The turmoil in Afghanistan, where al-Qaida remains unchecked and Da'esh has nearly doubled in size, requires a coherent regional response to prevent spillover to neighbouring countries.

Member States in Central Asia have already shouldered a great responsibility in this regard.

The Joint Plan of Action can continue to provide the mechanism by which the region can have the sort of networked, multilateral cooperation needed in these circumstances.

In his report *Our Common Agenda*, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres identified terrorism as a strategic global risk, and pointed to the need for continued international cooperation to prevent and counter terrorism.

The Secretary-General also underscored the need to tackle the global breakdown of trust and erosion of truth. I would like to emphasize today that social cohesion is an effective weapon against terrorism – that is why terrorists try to target our unity and sow the seeds of mistrust and confusion within and among our societies.

Distinguished participants,

It is more than 20 years since the Security Council adopted its landmark resolution 1373, demonstrating a united front against terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. And a little over 15 years ago, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy – a global blueprint for our common counter-terrorism efforts.

As you know, last year the General Assembly adopted a forward-looking, comprehensive and most importantly, *consensus*-based resolution, following its seventh review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to guide our counter-terrorism efforts going forward. This landmark resolution strengthened provisions in areas including human rights, the rule of law, and engagement with civil society, youth, and women.

As Central Asia moves into a new decade of regional counter-terrorism cooperation, the Tashkent Declaration and the updated Joint Plan of Action demonstrate the continued determination of Central Asian States to implement the Strategy, and fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

In this context, I would like to emphasize three points:

First, we must redouble our joint efforts to prevent terrorism as the region is facing new threats and challenges.

Military counter-terrorism operations may be necessary, but they are costly in terms of both human suffering and resources. An investment that *prevents* terrorism would offset some of the costs for security responses.

This includes addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and curtailing terrorist efforts to radicalize and recruit new members to their ranks.

Human rights and gender considerations are central in this regard.

Second, counter-terrorism must be based on a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

This involves strengthening institutions and structures that respond to terrorism.

But we must also connect the community leader with the law enforcement officer, the educator with the communicator, and the parent with the practitioner, to set the stage for a coherent response from all of society.

Thirdly, we must be better prepared today for the terrorism of tomorrow.

Law enforcement agencies detect and foil terrorist plots every day around the world, but each day is a new opportunity for terrorists to damage our societies. As the saying goes, we need to be lucky every time, the terrorists need to be lucky only once.

Strengthening the capacities to detect, investigate and counter the financing of terrorism is crucial as well as challenging in times of cryptocurrencies. Anticipating terrorist cyber threats creates a whole new arena for counter-terrorism.

Keeping up with how the threat landscape changes is instrumental to preempt terrorism and save lives. Overall, we must stay abreast of how the threat of terrorism to international peace and security evolves.

I hope the discussions today and tomorrow will address these themes and include examples of good practices and experiences from this region.

I am convinced this will help inform the global counter-terrorism response over the next few years.

Excellencies,

I am proud that the United Nations system continues to support Member States in Central Asia to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through the Joint Plan of Action.

This includes support in rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals with perceived links to terrorist groups; management of violent extremist prisoners; technical assistance for developing national action plans to prevent and counter violent extremism; and strengthening resilience to violent extremism.

We will continue to help requesting Member States counter the supply of small arms and light weapons and secure and manage their borders. We are exploring assistance to protect vulnerable targets and will ramp up support to counter terrorist travel.

We also support the development of a Counter-Terrorism Early Warning Network for Central Asia to mitigate threats from the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

I am grateful to our partners, particularly the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and our civil society partners, for their common commitment to combat the spread of terrorism.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is well known that kindness and solidarity characterize Central Asian people and communities.

These traits serve as a vaccine against violence and I hope this spirit perseveres.

This conference is an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of Central Asian countries to continued regional cooperation, within the framework of its updated Joint Plan of Action.

It also provides a solid footing for a balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, with benefits extending beyond the region.

I look forward to thought-provoking discussions and creative solutions.

Thank you.